



Reach for the Stars

Carlsbad Unified School District

Advanced Learner Education Program (GATE)

The Carlsbad Unified School District's Advanced Learner Education Program (GATE) is a child-centered program based upon the unique needs of the gifted and high-achieving students. Differentiation is the primary focus of our GATE program. It takes into consideration individual learning styles and special abilities, helping to develop positive attitudes, as well as academic skills. This pamphlet has been designed to help parents better understand and participate in their child's school experience.

What does the California Department of Education mandate about GATE programs?

- AB 2313 requires that GATE services be integrated into the regular school day as differentiated learning experiences based on the curriculum.
- It requires a district to address the social and emotional needs of gifted students.
- It requires a district to address the needs of all of the high ability students in the grades it serves.

What is Differentiation?

- Differentiation means providing students with different tasks and activities.
- Differentiation can be varying the pacing, challenge level, and/or instructional strategy to meet students' needs, learning goals, or interests.
- Differentiating the curriculum can relate to the content of the material (what is presented), the process by which such material is presented (how it is presented), and the products that students create, and/or the assessment of student work (how is it assessed).
- Differentiating for gifted or high achieving students allows them a wider range of creativity, critical thinking, and opportunities for intellectual growth.
- Differentiation is integrated into the regular school day as learning experiences based on the core curriculum.
- Different types of differentiation techniques may be used separately or in combination.



The goal of differentiation is to maximize learning time for the advanced learner.

What does Differentiation look like in the classroom?

Teachers work daily to find ways to reach out to individual learners at their varied points of readiness, interest, and learning preference. The following are examples of differentiated instruction used in the classrooms:

Flexible Skills Grouping

Using flexible grouping is integral to differentiated instruction. When the teacher groups flexibly, s/he creates instructional groups and adjusts specific activities to respond to students' learning needs. Flexible grouping is not an everyday activity. It does not create permanent groups; circumstances and student needs determine how often and at what challenge level students are combined. Allotted time for each activity varies according to the complexity of the task. Some times GATE students are all grouped together; at other times this kind of grouping is not necessary. Teachers can also consider flexible grouping from one classroom to another. An example would be two teachers pre-assessing their classes before a science unit and grouping students from both classes into groups according to abilities, achievement level, strengths, and weaknesses.

Pre-assessment and Compacting

Compacting encourages teachers to assess students before beginning a unit of study or development of a skill. It is a 3-step process that (1) assesses what a student knows about materials to be studied and what the student still needs to master, (2) plans for learning what is not known and excuses the student from mastered material, and (3) plans for freed-up time to be spent in enriched or accelerated study. Students who do well on the pre-assessment should not have to continue work on what they already know. An example would be a student who passes a pre-test on math facts. She would not have to practice those facts or take the post-test. She would be allowed to work on a different meaningful project in math or other subject of interest.

Tiered Assignments

Tiered activities are very important when a teacher wants to ensure that students with different learning needs work with the same essential ideas and use the same key skills. A “one-size-fits-all” activity is unlikely to help a struggling student or extend the understanding of a student with a greater knowledge and skill in the same area. An example is a teacher using different materials for different groups

studying the same topic or having a different focus for different product for their final reports on the topic.



Contracts / Management Plan

Contracts take a number of forms that begin with an agreement between students and teachers. The teacher grants certain freedoms and choices about how a student will complete tasks, and the student agrees to use the freedoms appropriately in designing and completing work according to specifications. An example would be a contract for vocabulary words. If a student showed 80%+ mastery of the regular class word list, he would join the class for instruction on the words he still did not know and be on a contract with alternative activities on days when he did not have to meet with the rest of the class.

Learning Centers / “Menus”

A Learning Center is a classroom area that contains a collection of activities or materials designed to teach, reinforce, or extend a particular skill or concept. For gifted learners, learning centers should move beyond cursory exploration of topics and practice of basic skills,

and should provide study in greater breadth and depth on interesting and important topics. Center work could be incorporated into a learning contract or “menu” option. “Menus” are lists of projects, activities, or end products for a specific subject, theme, or topic from which a student may select to work on in class. An example of an end-product “menu” would be giving a student the choice of writing a report, giving an oral presentation, giving a PowerPoint presentation, writing a play, creating a time-line, creating a class center, or filming a “TV show” to show student learning.

Interest Centers / Interest Groups

Interest centers (often with younger students) and interest groups (often with older students) typically provide enrichment for students who can demonstrate mastery/competence with required work. They are sometimes a vehicle for providing students with meaningful study when basic assignments are completed. An example for younger students might be a seasonal center with books, including seasonal song and poetry books, word dictionaries, season-related word searches and word games, other worksheets and coloring pages, models, puzzles, and art activities.

High Level Questions

In class discussions and on tests the teacher attempts to ensure that the highly able learner is presented with questions that draw on advanced levels of information, require leaps of understanding and challenge thinking. These higher levels go beyond rote memorization of facts or summaries of information. Students are asked to analyze (i.e. classify, compare, solve), evaluate (i.e. prioritize, judge, give viewpoint), and synthesize (i.e. design, hypothesize, forecast) the material. An example would be asking a student how the American Revolution compared to the French Revolution, their causes and effects on the country.

Independent Work or Special Projects (Longitudinal Studies)

With independent and/or special projects, the student and teacher identify a problem or topic of student interest. They develop a plan on the method of investigation and the end product the student will produce. This project should demonstrate the student's ability to apply skills and knowledge to the problem or topic. A longitudinal study allows a gifted student to explore many facets of one topic over a long period of time. It might last a semester, a year, or longer. Research, technology, and parent

involvement are necessary components of such a study. A student portfolio is a perfect place for a student to demonstrate work over time. Examples would be a first grade student, deeply interested in whales, making a world map of different whale migrations, or a fifth grade student working on a year-long project on the Civil War.

If you have any additional questions, please contact Joyce Vallone, CUSD GATE Facilitator, (760) 331-5023, or the GATE Liaison at your child's school.



Carlsbad Unified School District

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